UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/NGO/35
14 March 1997

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 24

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[4 March 1997]

1. The establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations is a considerable step forward in United Nations policy for the recognition and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples.

2. The repeated delays in preparing the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, however, seriously undermine the credibility of United Nations bodies, at a time when many of the Amerindian peoples are living in a state of complete deprivation. Obstacles to the completion of the draft declaration are due, it appears, both to divisions within the Amerindian movement, which are carefully maintained by those whose interests are threatened by the Amerindian resurgence (particularly in connection with the land rights claimed by the Amerindians), and by certain world or regional Powers. The highest priority, and the only possible way for the Amerindian peoples to achieve their rights, is through the unity of the representative indigenous movements and the solidarity without interference of the other NGOs throughout the world.

GE.97-10959 (E)

3. The poor status of the Amerindian movement today and the status it has the potential to achieve are significant: they reflect the actual importance attached by States to human rights, in that some States fear the Amerindian resurgence while others have nothing to gain from it. The rich Amerindian culture, which is a part of the common heritage of mankind, and the right of the Amerindian peoples to decide their own fate and recover their property for the purpose of exercising their right to development justify the Commission on Human Rights taking the necessary steps to expedite the adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, followed by the declaration itself.

- - - - -